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QUAD





QUAD

Published twice each year at Birmingham-Southern College as a means of presenting the best student literary efforts in keeping with the high standards set forth by the Publications Board.

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raindrops dribbled ceaselessly
down the grimy window as
great arms slung them out into
the darkened void of eternal
night. roaring and rolling,
celestial sheets of iron shook
and rattled, hailing torrents of
noise. like the lamp of diogenes,
the glaring tiger eyes
searched for the track.
sweeping huge swatches of
mud-bespattered asphalt
underneath its treaded paws,
the automaton pressed steadily forward.

blind beams pierced
the dark of stygia, and gouged
the eyes, obscuring the
stalwart, white-picket railing.
wet brakes squealed on rain-slickened
pavement, and fractured pickets
soared high as it smashed over
the cliff, tumbling all askew
down the sheer rock ravine.

and then . .

pink raindrops dribbled ceaselessly
over the broken, grimy window,
forming rivulets of lifelessness
that weaved erratic trails through
the battered, crumpled remains
before pouring their all
upon the scratched, scarred surface of the soil.

—DAVID HARGETT

UNTITLED

There was a mistake made
in an address
And a few quiet hours
Were ours to use in peace.

And the semi-circle moon
Shined on the glistening grass
Covered with evening dew
As we sought the dry moment of space
Beneath a tree to sit still and be
Only what the quiet in each of us demanded.

The moments were sweet and warm
And cool breezes played through the openings
in the land
And rolled down the soft slope
to cool our summer heated bodies,
dry the sweat
That rose in beads near our noses and hair.

Peace pervaded all our speech
Although nothing of merit was said
And only laughter sounded there.

Touches soft and sweet began the moment
When together we would lie in the grass
Silent in the knowledge of the other's closeness.
And gingerly you laid your head upon my breast
As I stroked the skin I loved so well
And knew in the quiet torment of my soul
That for you it was but a moment like
many moments with many others
And I, in the quiet torment of my soul,
Tried to still the sound of my blood
Dripping from the wound that may never heal.
And I stroked your head and kissed your hair
And bade you rest for your work lay yet ahead.

In the quiet torment of my soul
I died a thousand stinging deaths
And rose again from the dead
to find all the doors to your love closed;
to find that you had cut yourself off long ago,
and insulated yourself from every sting and blow
that life can deal.
And for you, in the quiet torment of my soul,
I died again.

Now you move and stir and breathe,
And take my face in your gentle hands
And kiss the lips that cried so long because
Perhaps you will never know
That quiet turmoil in your soul.

Time had passed and the moon
 Had changed color and place
 Nearly time to rise from beneath the spreading limbs
 And hand in hand to walk
 To the car that waited
 Ready to end
 The peaceful moment
 And cover the quietness of my soul
 With noise and sound.
 To blot out the things I would like to say
 With the noise of unwanted music.

But before we rise to leave
 A last long embrace
 That for a moment hides the pain to come
 And veils the lies of hands and lips.

Prepared only by that one moment in the night
 For the blinding, crushing light of the day
 Of the realization that all the sweet moments
 To you are naught but shallow kindnesses
 Lacking the depth of feeling they deserve
 Failing to still in the light of day
 The quiet torment of my soul.

—MEL

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RETURN TO LONGWOOD

a short story by KATHY MORRIS

"This next room was to be a billiard room. As you can see, it too, was used for living quarters instead. All the furniture in this room, all the furniture in this house, in fact, belonged to Haller Nutt and his family."

The small crowd followed the caretaker across the worn rug into the adjoining room. As he ran over the facts he had related so many times before, the little man, who was now the only occupant of the old house, studied his listeners.

The group was larger today; probably, he decided, it was larger because this was the last day of the Pilgrimage. Tomorrow all the tourists would pull out of Natchez, taking with them books, postcards, wrinkled maps of the city, and used-up camera film. The visitors this year had been no different from those of last year, or of ten years before, he concluded. They had different names and different faces, but there the individuality ended. He had long ago decided that all tourists, indeed all people, were essentially alike.

Some of the visitors to Natchez came from neighboring states; there were more than a few Yankees mixed with them. Once in a while during the Pilgrimage, there would come those with a special interest in the house: an architect from Alabama, a writer from Connecticut, a photographer from Georgia. Most of the visitors, however, were just families on vacation,

checking the brochure of the Natchez Garden Club from time to time to see what house was next on the yellow ticket tour.

Today among the crowd he noticed the young couple from Mississippi with their three small boys in tow. The girl shepherded her two oldest sons along, hushing them occasionally, and saying to no one in particular, "Isn't it horrible that this lovely, lovely house was never finished?" Her husband was carelessly supporting the baby with one arm and tapping frequently on the walls.

"Extermination is my business over in Hazelhurst," he had announced to the other visitors, who grinned at each other every time he tapped.

"He keeps right on tapping even though I told him the walls are quite hollow because of Dr. Nutt's invention of five-inch air pockets in the walls for insulation," thought the old caretaker.

As he continued to lead the little procession around the eight-sided building, the old man observed the middle-aged gentleman from New York who strolled arm-in-arm with his attractive fiancée, frequently inclining his head toward her as she made some clever comment. The retired couple from Florida was silent, but their eyes shone as they at last viewed the house they had so long read about.

When the group was gathered in the room in which hung the

portraits of the handsome Dr. Nutt, his beautiful wife, and two of their daughters, the caretaker noticed a man of thirty or thirty-five years standing alone near a door, apparently a late arriver. He was dressed neatly, but his clothes were somewhat out of date. As the guide moved on across the small room to point out the frosted fly-catcher and the wooden punkah to his visitors, he noticed the newcomer take out a gold pocket watch.

"I must talk to that man before he leaves," thought the speaker, talking faster and advancing toward the wooden steps leading to the next floor.

"Now, if you are ready," the old man hurried on, "I will take you upstairs." There was in the air the excitement which always prevailed when the tourists realized they were about to ascend to the first unfinished floor.

"Watch your step up here," he warned, leading the way. "This floor," he continued, "was actually to have been the main floor. This section here would have been covered with marble," he added, advancing toward the center of the house.

"This gap you see is where an imported marble spiral staircase would have led all the way to the dome."

At these words all eyes turned upward for a moment. The speaker and his listeners gazed

up past the aging timber that jutted from successive floors to the boarded dome. Eighty-five feet above them, a bat fluttered in his high kingdom, as if he were self-conscious because of the many upward stares. At the sight of this black beast the well-dressed lady shivered a little, and her fiancé put a protective arm around her.

"The first construction of Longwood was done by slaves of Dr. Nutt," the caretaker hurried on. "As the building progressed, skilled labor from Pennsylvania was brought in by Samuel Sloan, the architect of this house. By 1861 most of the exterior of the house and the interior of the basement were completed. Artisans had moved to this floor and were at work painting and plastering when, one day, a horseman rode up with the news that war had broken out. The laborers, being from the North, dropped their tools and brushes, just as you see them here, and demanded their pay. They weren't going to stay around the South, for sure. Dr. Nutt figured the war wouldn't last long; so he boarded up the unfinished floors and, with his wife and eleven children, moved into the basement to wait until the North and the South had settled their differences. The doctor died, however, before the War was over."

The procession moved through the dusty boarded beginnings and endings with the little old man quickly pointing out unfinished statuary and bricked-up fireplaces.

"Look at this old crate, John!" cried the lady from Florida, who had strayed away from the rest of the tourists. The man joined his wife on the front gallery before the large wooden packing box lettered Steiff's Piano Company. "This is the crate that the piano downstairs came in!" she said with great excitement.

"Now, if there are any of you who would like to see the next floor," said the caretaker, "be very careful because these steps are steep, and some of the boarding is coming loose upstairs, as it is, in places, on this floor. I am getting a little too old for such a climb myself, but if you are cautious, I assure you it is safe. I'll wait here if any of you have any questions."

The old man stood to the side as the curious visitors mounted the steps. The owner of the gold pocket watch was not among them.

"Wonder where he went?" thought the caretaker, almost aloud.

He walked from the foot of the steps across the dim and dusty room, stepping over the century-old planks of wood. Through the door-less entrances, he saw the man standing out on the gallery on the western side of the house. His heavy frame was partially illuminated by a thin shaft of sunlight. The caretaker walked toward the man, who was examining a half-completed dirt dauber's nest, which was attached to a rotten timber.

"I hope you finish, little fellow," the old man thought he

heard him say to one of the workers.

As the caretaker was about to call out a greeting, he heard the young Mississippi mother calling to him from the floor above.

"Mr. Winthrop? Would it be all right for Jim, Jr. to have some of this old moulding from this pile over here? I don't know why in the world he wants it, but . . ."

As he assured her that Jim, Jr., was welcome to the small souvenir, he thought that perhaps now he'd have a chance to speak to the man who had caught his interest. This time the slow clatter of feet on the stairs interrupted him. He looked around to watch the man from New York leading his rather pale fiancée from the floor above.

"Olivia is subject to acrophobia," came the explanation.

The old man uttered a few words of sympathy and turned back to where the singular visitor was standing. The shaft of sunlight now illuminated only dust and old boards.

He advanced toward the spot to investigate, but once again his progress was impeded.

"Mr. Winthrop, I wonder if I might ask you something about the floor plans that are hanging on the wall downstairs?" called the young man who had introduced himself as a student of architecture.

The dying sun could barely filter through the leaves of the giant oaks when the last of the visitors drove away, a car at a time, many looking back for a last glimpse of the Moorish castle

before they came to a turn in the narrow road.

Often old Mr. Winthrop stood at the door to his basement quarters, looking after the departing cars. He liked to see, by checking the license plates, if he had guessed correctly from their accents the section of the country responsible for these accents. He considered himself somewhat of an authority on the subject, and it was a pleasant diversion. On this day, however, he had already re-fastened the chain that separated the parking lot from the drive and had returned to the main floor before the dust in the drive had settled back down.

Since he had not seen the old-fashioned man leave, he could only conclude that he was still in the house.

His cries of "Hello? Anybody here?" passed throughout the open entrances unanswered. He walked through the rooms of that floor searching for the peculiar tourist, but soon the dark and the dust and his old age got the best of him. He returned to his rooms, puzzled and very tired.

He was almost unaware of warming some soup and drinking it slowly. Almost mechanically he went about locking the several doors. The old man plugged in his electric heater and pulled it close to his Bunny chair. He did not even think during this action, as he usually did, of the lady from Louisiana who had said that installation of electricity had completely ruined the "mood" of the house. He never made exception to the worn chair

he had found in a used furniture store when he told visitors that all the furniture in the house had belonged to Haller Nutt.

The old man was not sure how much later it was when he suddenly became aware that someone was standing over him. He realized suddenly that this was the man he had been looking for.

"I - I thought everybody had gone."

"No, sir, I've been here for a long time."

The caretaker noticed that the man pronounced each word with a polite crispness. Without being called up, his hobby came into play, and he decided that his visitor was from the eastern part of the country, perhaps from Massachusetts or Pennsylvania or New Jersey. Still, there was some other difference, subtle, undefinable.

"Where were you, son? I looked all over for you. I wanted to talk to you."

"May I ask the reason, sir?"

"Well, we don't get many visitors who talk to our dirt-daubers," he chuckled, "And to tell you the truth, that watch of yours intrigued me."

The younger man pulled the timepiece from his watch pocket and displayed it proudly. "This watch has been in my family for years," he said, "and handed down from father to son."

As his host examined the intricate scroll work that covered the back of the case and surrounded the ornately formed initials "W.S.L.," the owner continued to discuss his treasure

with justifiable pride.

"Those are my great-great-grandfather's initials," he explained. "The first son in our family is given this watch on his twenty-first birthday. I am very proud of the fob," he added, pulling the piece from his other pocket. "It's shaped like a level because all down the line the men in my family have been carpenters — the best carpenters in the world, sir!"

As he returned the watch and the fob to their proper compartments, the younger man said, "That was a good speech I heard you give today — as far as it went."

"As far as it went? Look, son, I know all about Longwood, and I make sure the people who pay to see it are told what I know. I've lived in this house for almost forty years. Why, I know every nook and cranny of Longwood. What do you mean 'as far as it went'?"

"Please don't get excited, sir. I simply mean there is something you did not show the tourists. You do not know about this yourself. If you would like, I will take you to it."

"Sure, I'd like to see what you think I don't know about this house. Son, I know more about this house than Haller Nutt himself knew."

"I do not question that, sir. And now, if you will kindly accompany me up the stairs?"

The two men climbed the make-shift stairs, and when they reached the door at the top, the caretaker said, "You'll have to

unlock it. Here, I'll get it. Some folks have trouble with these doors."

"That won't be necessary, sir," his companion replied. "I know that the knobs turn to the left. I don't expect any difficulty."

The older man took a flashlight which was hanging on a nail in the wall and handed it to the carpenter.

"Here," he said, "you lead the way."

They entered the main floor, and the younger man directed, "This way, sir." They walked toward the area in which the piano crate was standing near the wall.

"Now, sir, if you'll just stand aside for a moment, I'll get this packing box out of the way."

The caretaker did as he was asked and watched silently as, with ease, the younger man pushed the heavy carton away from the wall. Indeed he would be seeing a part of the wall he'd never seen before, he thought, as he'd never been able to move that box himself, even in his younger days. When the way was cleared, the man shone the flashlight on a bricked-up area which was several feet wide, similar to the other bricked-up niches for statuary scattered throughout the vast apartment. Here, however, the mortar was crumbling in places.

"I wonder if this floor is as safe as I've been telling people it is," thought the caretaker, as he watched the younger man pull a

brick from the wall to support the flashlight.

"Now, sir," continued the visitor, "I'd like to tell you a story. I heard you saying to the tourists that the men working here left when the news of war came." As he was talking he was swiftly destroying the wall, pulling out a brick at a time.

"One of these workers did not get away."

The surprised caretaker listened as he continued.

"You probably didn't know it, sir, but there were a few white Southern laborers working here, too. I might add, a few hot tempered white Southerners. On that day that the horsemen arrived with news of the war, the Southern workers and the Northern artisans had been especially at odds."

By then the man had removed almost all of the bricks.

"So, sir, one of the Southern workers flared up at one of the Northerners and crushed the man's skull with a hammer. And here," he announced, removing the last few bricks, "is that man's body."

Several moments passed before the astonished caretaker could speak or move. Then he lunged forth to examine the body. One hundred years had taken all of the flesh of the Pennsylvania man, but his bones remained to support his rotting clothes.

"My God!" the old man cried, moving his shaking hands out to touch the skeleton. He ran his

fingers over the crumbling material of the suit. He stopped at the feel of something hard in the pocket.

"His money! It's still here!"

The caretaker pulled out some gold coins from the pocket, tearing the material of the pants as he did so. A century had scarcely dulled the yellow metal he examined by the rays of the light.

At length, the old man put the coins on the floor and re-examined the body. With trembling fingers he felt a chain running across the vest. He pulled the chain, tearing the pocket to which the gold links led. The chain was attached to a heavier object which, he realized, as he brought his find into the light, was a watch.

He ran his fingers over the fancy scroll work which covered the case. Then slowly and with great difficulty, he turned the timepiece over in his hand. On this side he saw the ornate letters "W.S.L." With a gasp, he fumbled in the pocket at the other end of the chain and pulled out the fob shaped like a level.

He froze. His dulled eyes gazed at the object in his hands, while his stunned mind tried to reject them. Finally, with great effort, he forced himself to turn around. Only the steady beam of the flashlight remained to keep him company at this lonely wake.

—KATHY MORRIS

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

River waves lap lap
'neath the rickety pier;
fog mist shrouds the
quiet earth and dims
the vision. Away, a
wild loon cries, and
an insomniac fish breaks
water. Rays of the rising
sun creep on
tiptoes through the
lifting mist to glint
on dirty, flowing currents
and break the dawn.

—DAVID B. HARGETT

HAVE FAITH IN SMALL BEGINNINGS

To some all kisses
Contracts make,
All embraces, bindings.

Why must they give
All themselves
When joy is in the finding?

—ARTHUR HOWINGTON

FRAGMENT

The days and nights melt softly
One into the other
Sand grains trickling
Down the proverbial hour glass.

Each one, too small to be accountable,
Too insignificant to be forgotten.

—ALICE TYLER

WAR STAR

Hold the knife to moonlight;
a thousand rayed star
skims along its spine
and drops whirling
silverwork
down the thorns of brambles
settling in the mist
of a spider's web.
The old man,
weary of stars and thirst,
sleeps, does not stir
with the quiver
of a fallen star.
Dreaming, he sits
in the black chambers of quiet
polishing his silver sword
for treasures more precious than stars.

—JOHN YORK FOUST

NATIVITY

CAST A NET

Cast a net by moonlight;
catch the moon if you can,
for she is like a dark girl's heart
floating beyond a fisherman's hand.
Cast a net by moonlight;
catch the silver fish of tears,
for love is like a midnight lake
for the fisherman who hears
all the cries of lakesides
as he throws his net again
wide upon the golden veins
of water. By moonlight
catch the moon if you can,
but once the net is cast and laid
never know that silver heart again.

—JOHN YORK FOUST

Beautiful, they were;
In that moment all the beauty which exists
Shadowed all the ugliness.
Then the smiling hand of the girl
Reached, lightly,
And met the searching movement of the babe.

This is beauty's one
Universal action:
The Mother's first hesitant touch of her son
In what some have said was a stable.

—JOE BASENBERG



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MONOLOGUE ON WOMAN

by SALLY ALEXANDER

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following essay was presented as a dramatic monologue in the 1966 Miss Southern Accent Pageant. It is being printed in QUAD by request. The quotation concluding the work is from THE PROPHET by Kahil Gibran.

Beauty lives in the heart and is translated there to become the language of the eyes. In the eyes of my mother when I was born, I was beautiful, but there was no beauty then to me. She had been warm and her inner darkness was gone so abruptly . . . with a strange yearning I could not explain, I had in one moment pushed myself free of that soft and comforting loveliness . . . and I was born.

Where I wondered, was there in this world so new, so alien, so cold, a beauty as dear as that of the world of the unborn?

Then my mother held me in her arms for the first time and I began to learn another form of beauty . . . the beauty of instinctive love, of two arms that were at once soft and firm, of lips that murmured s t r a n g e rhapsodic sounds. . . .

The sounds were words and the words meant love. I began to grow, to feel the words in my heart and in my mouth. They quickened to my lips in the spring when every dandelion and every jonquil nodded to me . . . nodded to me, for I was queen of May and April, goddess of the forest temple . . .

I saw so many beautiful days . . . I wonder now that I

cannot recall them every one. But then I did not know how precious the beauty is, how soon the world of man can color the sight to shadows that hide the loveliness a child alone will recognize.

The shadowing came . . . and I was eighteen. The yearning was there again, strange again—that yearning so nameless, pushing at the walls of my heart and keeping my tongue sharp and short, my head wild with dreams as fantastic as my intense hates and loves. I sang sadly to myself and took long walks alone . . . sat in the grass late at night . . . and then grew afraid of the loneliness.

I knew the words. But where, I wondered, were the forms? Where was Love— Where was Beauty?

What girl-child grows up and does not early learn the importance of being beautiful, the prestige of being loved? She stares into the mirror face and looks, looks for the sign, the mark of loveliness. She crawls in to herself to hide from the watching, commenting world: they know, they say, what beauty is. Better to hide inside herself than to risk their saying "NO beauty in you. No love for you" . . .

It is a lonely place . . . this stop in age when you begin to learn who you are . . . when every leaf trembling in the breeze or the rain makes you ache . . . when spring is too bright and too vulnerable for you to do anything more than to cry at April . . . when days are bleak and chilling in the midst of summer months . . . and you alone see the doubts like clouds looming on the hazy horizons of your future. . . .

There came into this place one who ended the loneliness. Not suddenly, not at all quickly. But he was there and . . . how can I explain? Does it matter when or why?

At the beginning, I knew only that the chill was gone, the cold ache around my heart was fading . . . the dandelions, the jonquils nodded like old and venerable friends to their returning mistress of May . . . the air, the days, the moments were bright with a dimly recalled assurance . . . I was loved.

I was beautiful to the only world I cared to be beautiful in . . . his world. Some girls, I know, yearn much more than I for a beauty's accolades . . . they seek the universal praise in contests and honors and photographs. . . .

Sweeter to me is he than the

contest queen's banquet . . . dearer to me his touch than the compliments shouted at the pageant winner . . . brighter and truer is the light in his eyes than all the spotlights the stage can focus on the lovely.

The roses, I know, will fade; the flattery will silence; the spotlights burn out . . . and the beautiful girl will fade and age out of the memory of fickle admirers. But love immortalizes beauty in the eye of the lover. . . .

Now I have the beauty every woman is born to have: her child. I feel the weight of love within me . . . yes, yes, my mother knew and her mother and now I.

But who will tell the girl-child? I hurt with her though she is silent now . . . I feel her tears and her laughter and watch her search for the meaning of the words:

Beauty, Love.

How can I tell her what I know?

"Beauty is not a need but an ecstasy.

It is not a mouth thirsting nor an empty hand stretched forth, But rather a heart enflamed and a soul enchanted.

It is not the image you would see nor the song you would hear, But rather an image you see though you close your eyes and a song you hear though you shut your ears.

. . . Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.

But you are life and you are the veil.

Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in the mirror.

But you are eternity and you are the mirror."

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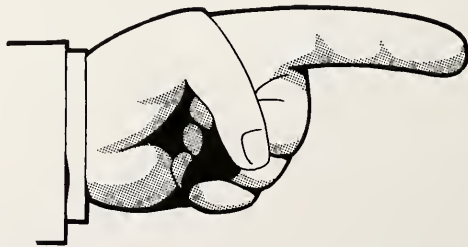
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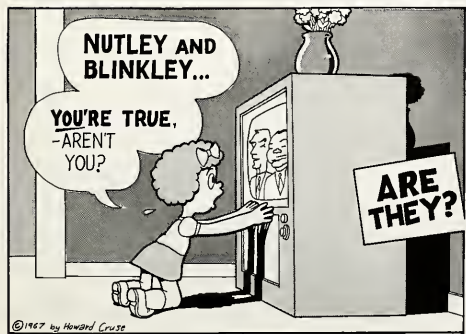
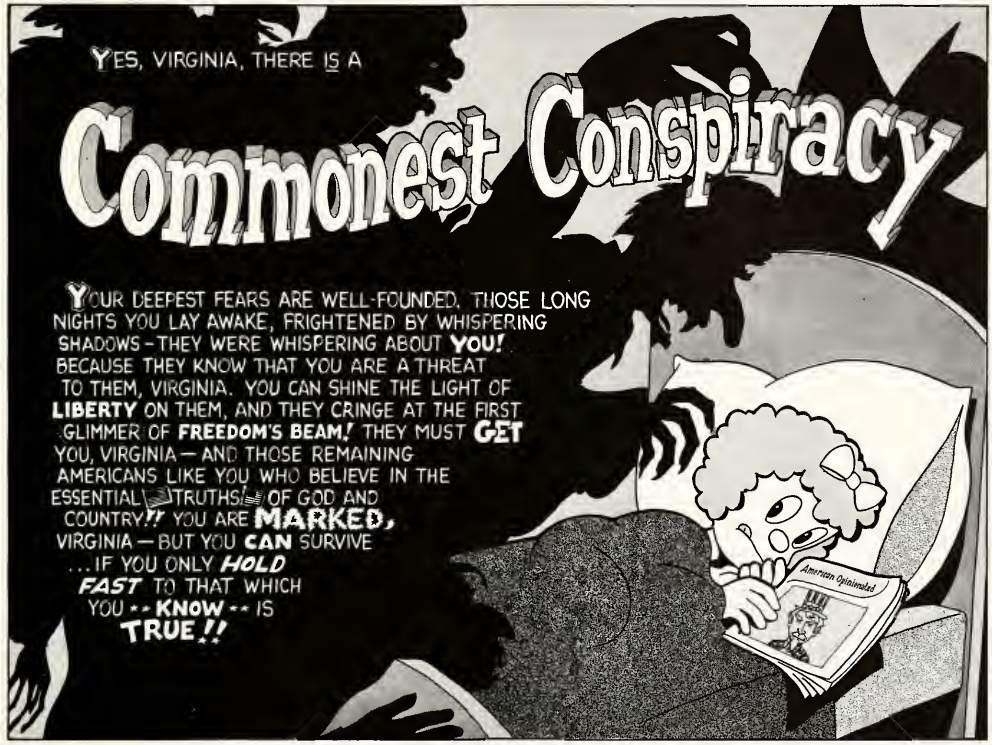


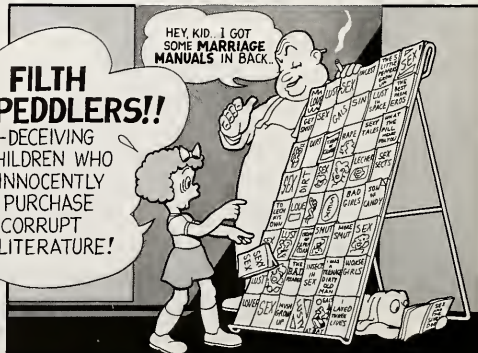
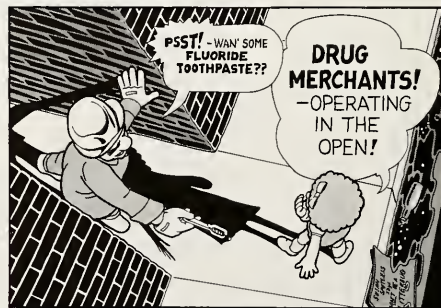
NOTE: The target of **The Commonest Conspiracy** is not any group or ideology. The feature certainly does not intend to minimize the dehumanization that totalitarianisms bring. The story is simply about **fear**. Fear is the least effective weapon against totalitarianisms, but it is the one most commonly enjoyed.

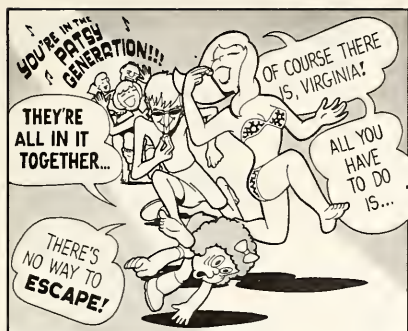


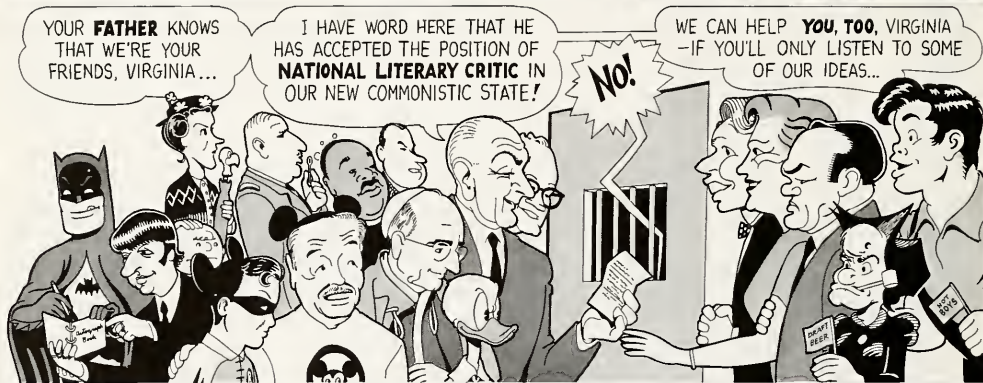
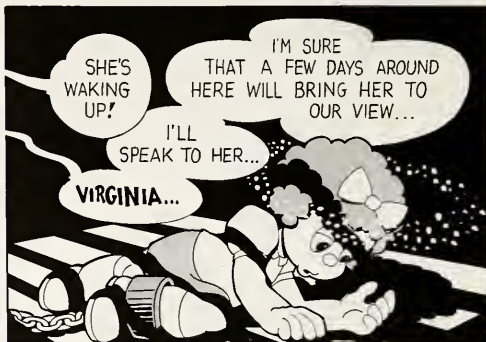


A Satire by Howard Cruse









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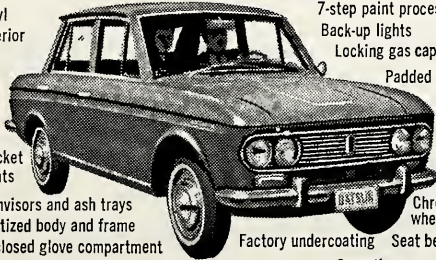
NEW YEAR

Wind blown leaves noisily rake the street
Carrying cups, paper, and cigarette stubs
Along the tire striped, silent asphalt.
Barren branches tangle with the wind
And creak, protesting, at the cold.
Tired and grey, the sky bears heavily
Clouds sodden with winter rain . . .
The world stands aged and weary before you
So you tell me, yet I see
Green and gold where brown hangs—
And awesome purple in the chilling grey,
Hear the rustle of debris and leaves
Not as the rattle of death in the
old year's throat
But as the swinging censor chain harbinging
The pungent unlivid days to come.

—SALLY ALEXANDER

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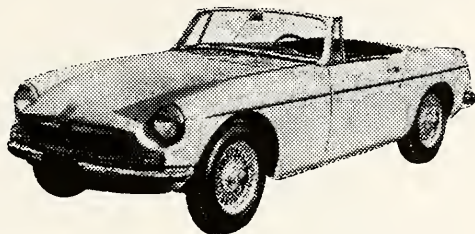
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